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How to Make Your Own Soda

by [Meg Favreau](#) on 24 March 2011

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Photo: poolie

I will admit that I am not a huge soda drinker; most of the time, it makes my teeth hurt. But when I do drink soda, I want it to be worth it. I'd much rather drink a bracing, sinus-opening ginger beer or a fresh carbonated lemonade than some boring old can of Coca-Cola. That's why I love making soda from scratch — I get to control the taste. (See also: [51 Uses for Coca-Cola](#))

Making soda can be as simple or as complicated of a project as you like. There are hundreds of different recipes for sodas, but as beverages, sodas all have the same basic parts: sweetness, flavor, and carbonation. Thus, directions for making your own soda don't vary as much by soda flavor as they do by how much time and money you want to spend.

This article focuses less on recipes (although it does link to some very good ones) and more on the different ways to approach soda making, so you can decide which way is right for you. Whether you want to make your own ginger beer for a great [Dark and Stormy](#), provide a fun project (and less-sugary treat) for your kids, or just serve a unique drink at your next party, these soda-making techniques will help you out — all you need to do is choose how you want to carbonate and flavor it.

Choose Your Carbonation



Meg Favreau

SENIOR EDITOR



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“A frugal-living, deal-hunting, food-loving lady.”

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How you carbonate your homemade soda will have the biggest effect on the cost and time involved. There are four basic ways to create carbonation.

Mix Your Ingredients With Seltzer

It doesn't get much easier than this. Buy a bottle of plain seltzer and mix it with your desired flavoring ingredients.

Buy a Carbonation Machine

[SodaStream](#) offers countertop carbonation machines that inject carbon dioxide (what makes carbonated water carbonated) into still beverages. Their smallest model is just under \$80, and depending on how often you purchase seltzer or soda, this could be a money-saver...or it could be one of those underused gadgets that sits on your counter. The company also sells soda flavorings (including for energy drinks!), but you can easily use your own flavoring mixes.

Carbonate With Dry Ice

Dry ice is solid carbon dioxide. It can be dangerous to work with, but it can also carbonate a beverage mighty fast. The video below shows you a little bit how it works, and why it can be dangerous:



([link to video](#))

Let Your Soda Ferment

Ginger beer, root beer, and birch beer are all made like real beer — allowing yeast to create the carbonation. Because of that, these sodas are ever-so-slightly alcoholic, but due to their short fermentation time, the alcohol percentage is very low. I've made ginger beer using champagne yeast (purchased from a home-brew store). It had a milder carbonation than your average soda, but a great ginger kick. There are several sets of instructions online for how to make your own soda using yeast, such as Jeffrey Morgenthaler's [ginger beer recipe](#) and CHOW's [root beer recipe](#).

One recommendation I would make, if the aesthetics don't bother you, is to make your soda in used plastic bottles instead of glass ones — it makes it much easier to tell when the fermentation process is complete. If you visit your local home-brew store, they should be able to provide both ingredients and guidance.

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Choose Your Flavoring

Just like carbonating, there are several different ways to approach [flavoring](#) soda. Depending on how sweet you like your stuff, all of these methods will likely require the addition of sugar as well, which should be added in the form of simple syrup (a mix of water and sugar heated in a saucepan until the sugar dissolves completely) unless the recipe you're using says otherwise.

Fruit Juice

When I was young, my mother would serve me "healthy soda," a 1:1 mix of orange juice and seltzer. The O.J. can easily be replaced with cranberry, apple, or any other fruit juice. You can also add simple syrup for a more traditional soda-like sweetness.

Syrups and Extracts

Readymade extracts are available for common soda flavors like root beer and birch beer, which require several different ingredients to make from scratch. You can also add [cola syrup](#) (which, on its own, is supposed to help soothe an upset stomach).

Syrup From Scratch

The difficulty and expensiveness of your syrup depends on how complex of a soda you want to make. Some recipes, like for [ginger ale](#), are relatively simple, while root beer can involve around a dozen different ingredients (many of the more common [root beer ingredients](#) are available online from Leeners). Making your own flavoring syrup way to experiment — what happens if you add pear juice to your ginger ale?

If you're trying any of the more advanced methods (such as fermenting yōūr soda making syrup from scratch), I recommend trying a batch or two using a [recipe](#), but once you get used to it, start experimenting with different flavors.

Have you made your own soda? Do you have a favorite recipe? Share it in the comments.

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TRACY TRAN

1 APR. 2011 | 7:52 PM

I have a Sodastream and want to use natural ingredients. Looking at the "healthy soda" section, I might want to try fruit juices. How would that work on the Sodastream? Should I put one liter of water, carbonate it and pour one liter of fruit juice, and combine it to a two liter bottle?

REPLY

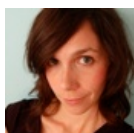


SHARKTOOTH

5 DEC. 2011 | 11:39 AM

Great article! The best place I've found for recipes is homemadesodaexpert.blogspot.com There's a lot of good recipes there including a knock off for Mountain Dew. Definitely going for the pear juice in the ginger ale next time. Nice touch

REPLY



MEG FAVREAU

5 DEC. 2011 | 6:21 PM

I'll have to check that site out! I haven't made soda in a little while, but my boyfriend and I just brewed our first round of beer, and it's made me want to get back to soda experiments soon.

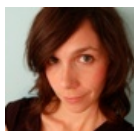


THE HOMEMADE SODA EXPERT

22 APR. 2012 | 9:39 PM

Thanks for the mention Sharktooth, the Mountain Dew recipe is a work in progress.

Meg,
Wonderful article! I've linked it onto my blog's links and references page, I hope you don't mind.



MEG FAVREAU

23 APR. 2012 | 10:31 AM

I don't mind all, homemade soda expert! I'm glad you liked the article.



SEAN

19 MAR. 2012 | 12:01 PM

Great article. I have been thinking about buying a sodastream but haven't been too sure about it.

REPLY



THE CHRISTIAN DOLLAR

19 MAR. 2012 | 4:20 PM

My wife and I have a SodaStream and love it! Mostly we just make fizzy water (my wife more accurately calls it sparkling water) but sometimes I'll add in some lemon or a rootbeer flavoring.

It's a lot of fun to make your own soda. Plus, we're finding it saves us trips to the grocery store when we have all the supplies we need to make it at home!

Great article!

[REPLY](#)

TRISHB

19 MAR. 2012 | 7:31 PM

I really want to get my hands on some water kefir grains and try making soda that way.

[REPLY](#)

MEG FAVREAU

20 MAR. 2012 | 10:38 AM

Oooh, I've never heard of that method, Trish -- how does it work?



RON

28 MAR. 2012 | 11:07 AM

For those homebrewers with a CO₂ setup with a regulator; there is another way. There's a gadget on the market that is a ball lock setup that screws onto a soda bottle so that you can force carbonate.

Just make your mixture in a soda bottle. Put in in a cold fridge to chill it down. It's best to squeeze out all the air left in the soda bottle. Attach the gadget hooked up to your CO₂ to the soda bottle and shake until you don't hear CO₂ still being infused into the liquid. I would then let it settle awhile, shake again maybe, let it sit and carefully take the gadget off and put the bottle cap back on.

[REPLY](#)

GUEST

14 MAY. 2012 | 3:44 PM

wow those directions made great soda so everyone should use those steps :D

[REPLY](#)